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REMEMBER THE TIMES…

COVERAGE OF THE BISON'S FINAL GAMES

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PHOTO BY STAN MADDUX

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City council approves softball field lease agreement with Recreation Authority

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the New Buffalo City Council approved an Oselka Park Softball Field Lease Agreement with the New Buffalo Area Recreation Authority (NBARA) at a special meeting Monday, Feb. 26.

Members approved the agreement in a 3-2 vote, with Mark Robertson and mayor John Humphrey being the dissenting votes.

About six months ago, Humphrey said that he discussed with New Buffalo Area Schools Superintendent Adam Bowen about leasing the field to the school.

He added that the school has never had equal facilities for girls and boys sports because they "don't technically own the girls softball field," therefore putting them in violation of Title IX.

"The problem for me is that I feel it's been the school's responsibility to make this right before we get to the Recreation Authority," he said.

Humphrey added that he's lived here for 10 years, during which his daughter has played softball.

"We've had no efforts to build a softball program over that time beyond what already existed and it all revolved around one person - and when that went away, the program went away... So there's no plan from New Buffalo Area Schools to develop softball yet I see in this agreement we want to build a $2.5 or $3 million softball field or $2.5 or $3 million baseball field - potentially," he said.

The problem with the NBARA, Humphrey said, is that it's not known if the city will be liable for matching grants.

"We're going to have to ask public for .75 millage to even pretend to be doing anything about roads they're going to have to vote on in the fall - and that's going to be painful for a lot of people....We build all this stuff but there's nobody to fill it, I just think that's a bad look," Humphrey said.

Robertson concurred with Humphrey, adding that the city will need to spend money on roads and infrastructure and he's concerned about matching grants.

Councilmember Vance Price, who's a teacher at the middle school, said that school's numbers have fluctuated through the years and that its small size plays a role.

He said that the school had spent money to fix the field years ago.

"I can't say, 'Well school, you've got to go backward, so you've got to fix this now,' it's the Recreation Authority now - we're part of the Recreation Authority and that's where we're at this point...I think working together is our best option," he said.

Bowen said that "just to get in the game" in terms of knowing what grants are out there to fix the field, they have to have the lease agreement before writing any grants.

He noted that the deadline to submit grants is April 1.

They can "whittle away" some of the items, such as the press box, with Bowen adding that they just gave the council a "ballpark of things of what can potentially happen."

City manager Darwin Watson said the NBARA "cannot obligate the city to do and spend any dollars" but can make recommendations that have to be brought back and approved by each entity before the NBARA can proceed.

New Buffalo Area Schools Board of Education President Lisa Werner said the board joined the NBARA because it involves a "cooperative effort between multiple entities."

"When you have a cooperative effort between multiple entities, you're more likely to get grants and so if we don't cooperate, then we don't know what grants we could get," she said.

She added that the school is working on merging all sports with River Valley to increase the number of players on teams.

"If we can build a program and a space for them, I think they can grow," she said.

Also at the meeting, councilmembers approved

Councilmembers approved recognizing the New Buffalo Yacht Club as a local non-profit within the city.

The club plans to host a couple fundraising events in the upcoming year, including Gaming Football Games – Strip Cards (every weekend) and a bingo night (once or twice a year). To do so, the club has applied to obtain a Charitable Gaming License from the state, with one of the necessities of the application being that the club is a local nonprofit operating in the city.

@ cipriani's, the only walk-ins are "Italian" and models.
— Dino N. Fatouros

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
JOHN HUMPHREY, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJESKI, JOHN HUMPHREY, BRIAN FLANAGAN, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
PETE RAHM, MICHELLE HEIT, MICHELLE HANNON, PATTY IAZZETTO, JACK ROGERS
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
Sheriff, Chuck Heit
Undersheriff, Greg Sanders
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 10AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, BRADLEY BURNER, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, BILL MARSKE
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM

VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday October thru March at 5PM EST
KIMBERLY WOLNIK, CLERK-TREASURER
HARRY WALDER BLAKE O'HALLORAN, JAMES BRACEWELL, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES

MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

Grand Beach Village Council approves draft master plan

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the Grand Beach Village Council approved a draft master plan at their Wednesday, Feb. 21, meeting.

Council president Harry Walder said that the draft will be sent out to other local agencies, which will have 63 days to reply and make any comments. The draft will also be on the village's website.

The draft will then return to the Master Plan Task Force, which will look at any comments that were made and make any necessary changes before submitting it to the Planning Commission, which will review and make changes and recommend it to the council. The council will have the chance to review it and make changes before accepting it.

The draft plan was approved in a 4-1 vote, with member James Bracewell being the "nay" vote.

Councilmember Blake O'Halloran called the plan "really informative."

"Three members of this board ran really because of this master plan and I am really happy and proud that I can say that I'm part of this because this is going to bring us into the future," he said.

Councilmember Ed Brandes said he likes the emphasis the document has on accountability and public comment.

"People may not agree with everything here but they cannot say they weren't given the chance to give input," he said.

Bracewell said that, since the beginning, he's believed that the village should've hired a professional consultant to help with the plan, adding that there were concerns about the expenses.

"I think it's a very dangerous policy to put a neighbor (Diane Cody, chairwoman of the task force), in a position where she is defensive about her positions - and rightly so, you did the work, you did the slide presentation," he said.

Walder said that the document will go to a consultant when the council votes yes on it. Last October, the council approved hiring Beckett and Raeder, Inc. as the plan's consultant.

"This is a draft, this is not the final document - you'll have the consultant's review and their input and they will cost $5,000 instead of $40,000," he said.

Council members approved increasing the golf green fees and the rental golf cart fees for 2024.

O'Halloran, who serves as the pro shop and golf commissioner, said that the fees haven't been increased in a long time.

He noted the benefits unique to their golf course, such as the golf parking fee allowing someone to park anywhere in the village as well as to ride their golf cart on the course.

O'Halloran added that green fees and fees for golf cart rentals have also increased at neighboring courses. Serviscape has increased its cost, and everything in the pro shop has gone up 17% and labor costs have gone up on average about 10%.

The following green fees were approved: weekdays for the resident 9 hole fee will increase from $14 to $16 and weekends from $16 to $18 and nonresidents will increase from $17 to $20 on weekdays and from $19 to $23 on weekends; the 18 hole fee for residents will increase from $24 to $26 on weekdays and from $25 to $28 on weekends and the non resident fee will increase from $26 to $30 on weekdays and $30 to $33 on weekends.

The rate for seniors (62 years or over) will increase from $11 to $14 on weekdays and weekends, juniors (14-21 years) from $11-13 and children (6-13 years) from $6 to $8.

Regarding the resident only punch cards (10 rounds), the rate will increase from $160 to $180 for adults, $110 to $140 for seniors, with one free round still included with the punch cards.

There will also be a new season pass for unlimited golf for one individual (non-transferrable) for $1,500.

The following 2024 rental golf cart fees were also approved: nine holes will be increased from $15 to $17 and 18 holes from $20 to $22.

Council members approved increasing the golf cart parking sticker fee by $5 for residents and nonresidents.

Council members approved purchasing a beach access sign for the Whitewood Beach access point, which will help them gauge the public's reaction to the signage.

Council member Peter Doerr, who serves as parks and beaches commissioner, said that the parks and beaches committee has discussed "very discrete" signage for the access points to help new residents identify the points, particularly in an emergency.

The signs would replace the current ones and have the access points' name on them.

Local government is where the rubber hits the road. While state legislators and members of Congress are more remote, local officials are present and visible. They are the first responders of politics. — *David Axelrod*

Council members approved purchasing a golf cart parking sign for the Ely Beach access at a cost not to exceed $200. Doerr said that, with the access points that will be opening over time, there's a need to specify where golf cart parking is allowed and that they could gauge the public's reaction to signage by starting with Ely.

It was agreed that Brandes would investigate how the issue of streetlights should be handled within the village.

Walder said that police chief Ryan Layman and assistant police chief Jamie Flick approached him about adding street lights to the Golfmore Subdivision. There was also a request from Andrew Kelly, who's developing the 10 acres, on the requirements on streetlights on the streets that they'll be putting into the development.

Walder said the zoning ordinance mentions street lights but doesn't make specifications, such as height requirements.

Council members approved an expenditure of $2,961.50 for a police storage box for the black Chevy Tahoe based on the assumption that this is a transferable product in the future, which should be researched further.

A payment of $500 to Claire Sullivan for finding and mapping the parcels and unbuilt roads owned by the village was approved.

Bracewell noted that Frank Giglio had sent a letter with a "succinct and intelligent statement" with regards to safety concerns for the future Marquette Greenway, which is slated to go down Grand Beach Road and cross over the railroad tracks before continuing onto U.S. Highway 12.

"We had an engineering company expand the problem as to where the bikes are going to sit adjacent to the tracks," Bracewell said, adding that there should be a "separate crossover" for them.

O'Halloran said he hopes New Buffalo Township takes into consideration the amount of marijuana dispensaries that were approved to go along the highway, which will increase traffic at an already busy intersection that's located where the greenway will cross onto the highway.

Another Michigan marijuana bust in Indiana

BY STAN MADDUX

Another man coming from Michigan was allegedly caught with a huge amount of marijuana in LaPorte County.

Jonathan Millard is charged in La Porte Superior Court 1 with dealing marijuana.

According to court documents, he was pulled over on Interstate 94 at Michigan City Feb. 23 for failing to properly use his turn signals multiple times while changing lanes and tailgating.

LaPorte County Police said the investigation shows he traveled from his home in Wisconsin to the Detroit area and was returning home the next day when pulled over.

With help from a K9 dog, police said there were 56 one-pound packages of leafy marijuana recovered from his rent-a-car along with 1,000 THC vape cartridges, three boxes of THC gummies and syrup and four jars of THC wax.

Whether the marijuana was purchased legally from a dispensary was not revealed.

A number of people have been arrested in LaPorte County in recent months for transporting marijuana purchased legally in Michigan through Indiana where the drug remains illegal.

Some of the marijuana in those traffic stops were acquired at dispensaries in places like New Buffalo Township and Buchanan.

Millard could face an up to six-year sentence on the level 5 felony charge.

After posting bond, he was allowed by a judge to live in Wisconsin to await the outcome of the case.

Illinois man accused of attempting to smuggle tobacco, marijuana into prison

BY STAN MADDUX

An Illinois man is accused of trying to smuggle tobacco and marijuana into Indiana State Prison.

Michael Bright, 49, is charged in LaPorte Superior Court 2 with attempted trafficking with an inmate.

According to court documents, Bright on Feb. 18 stepped out of a vehicle that stopped outside the prison.

A prison guard spotted him walking on the street outside the wall of the prison with a bag in his hand.

While Bright was walking back and forth, the correctional officer pulled up in his on duty vehicle and told him to stop.

According to court documents, close to 16 ounces of tobacco and 30 grams of marijuana were discovered in the bag.

Bright, who lives between Chicago and Joliet, told investigators he didn't know what was inside the bag and during an altercation with a friend stepped out of the vehicle to take a walk.

He could face an up to six year sentence on the level 5 felony charge.

TOWN SQUARE

LETTERS TO THE *NEW BUFFALO TIMES*:

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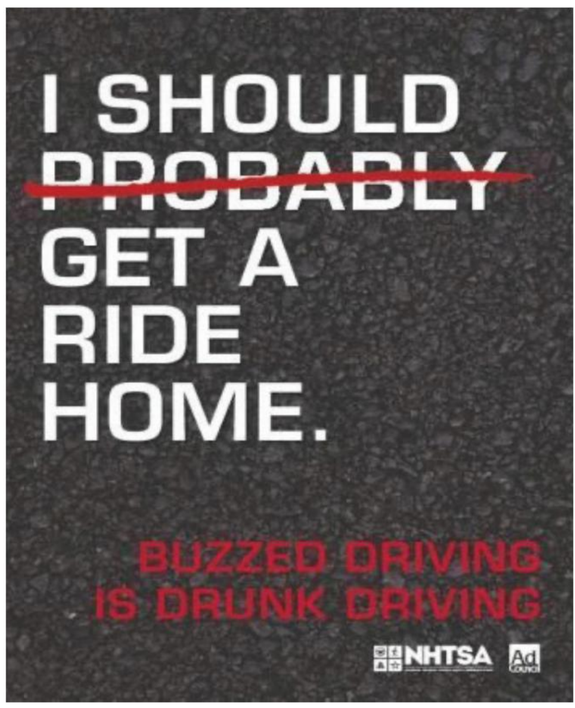
The New Buffalo Lions Club has two donation boxes in our community. They are located in New Buffalo at Sommerfeld Chapel, 15 N. Barton St. and HomeTown Pharmacy, 1 N. Whittaker St.

— JULIE FLICK,
NEW BUFFALO LIONS CLUB



SCHOLASTICS

Elementary cafeteria/kitchen expansion advances to the next phase

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

New Buffalo Area Schools Food Services Director Patty Iazzetto said that the elementary school students, staff and kitchen staff are "gearing up for a "wonderful adventure" when the cafeteria staff and operations closes down the current 1970s era kitchen this weekend to make way for a new one.

"We'll be moving tables and equipment and food into our temporary kitchen, which is the teachers workroom, and into the cafeteria, which is half of the gymnasium," Iazzetto said at the New Buffalo Area Schools Board of Education meeting Monday, Feb. 26.

A transportation van will be available for transporting food back and forth between the high school and elementary school throughout the project, which is scheduled to be completed by fall.

Current food services, which includes breakfast, lunch, three school snacks and an afterschool snack for the Bison After School Enrichment program, will continue.

The kitchen staff will prepare meals in half of the teachers' workroom. The walk-in cooler, which will be replaced by a smaller one, won't be available, along with a dishwasher and other equipment. Iazzetto said that they're confident that they'll be able to make the space, such as the cooler for refrigerated items, usable, although they can rely on some storage at the high school.

There'll be some repeat menu items, such as Artisan Farms lettuce and fresh vegetables and fruits. Sandwiches will be offered Monday, Wednesday and Friday and the high school kitchen staff will prepare chicken nuggets and then a hot side (corn or potato smiles) Tuesdays. On Thursday, nachos or hot dogs, which will be made in crock pots and a roaster in the temporary kitchen, will be offered.

Dirty dishes will be transported to the high school, where someone will wash them. Compostable lunch bags and biodegradable foam trays on the hot lunch days will replace lunch trays, and there'll be no real silverware.

Board president Lisa Werner said that everyone was aware of the big task that lay ahead of them when they embarked on kitchen/cafeteria expansion.

"I just want to thank you for your compassion, your enthusiasm for the school district itself and for food service - it makes a big difference who the leader is and what that looks like," she said to Iazzetto.

Board members approved the cooperative sports program with River Valley for junior varsity baseball for the 2024 spring season.

It had been discussed at the last meeting that there may not be enough junior varsity players on each side to field a full team without merging them.

New Buffalo Area Schools Superintendent Adam Bowen said that approval of the merger would serve as a backup plan in case there weren't enough players.

River Valley is the lead school on it and was in charge of finding a coach. The merger is contingent upon the River Valley school board approving it at their meeting that night.

Board members approved the New Buffalo Daycare program to operate year round.

Board members approved the lease of the baseball field to the New Buffalo Area Recreation Authority (NBARA).

Bowen said that the city had approved leasing the softball field to the NBARA at a special meeting that afternoon (see page 3).

He said that having three entities working together increases the chance of obtaining grants.

A NBARA meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 28, to approve both lease agreements.

Board members heard from Douglas Kessler and Andrew Reynolds of DNA Creative, which has been helping the district produce its videos on social media and the website.

Reynolds and Kessler said they're proposing being the marketing team for the district.

"Ultimately, what we want to do in this next step with the district is to take the strategic approach to our marketing efforts and align that to help drive enrollment into the district," Kessler said.

He said this would involve "elevating marketing solutions," such as the videoing, and "enhancing these other sectors of marketing to bring in a new elevated approach."

Goals would include "increase the brand awareness and increase engagement with everything New Buffalo," Reynolds said.

"Really what we're proposing is a more targeted digital marketing strategy - just specific markets we can continue to identify and then have that cohesive marketing strategy," he said.

The purchase of a 2025 CE School Bus (PB110) from MIdwest Transit for $139,140 was approved.

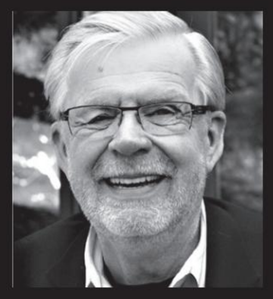
Werner read the board's mid-term evaluation of Bowen, which states the board finds his performance "as highly effective in all areas of evaluation including Government and Board Relations, Community Relations, Staff Relations, Business and Finance and Instructional Leadership."

"In conclusion, the Board of Education is appreciative of the leadership of Mr. Bowen and will continue to support him in his leadership of the District. We look forward to continuous improvements that are standardized based on data and assessments," the statement said.

I see the game differently than some guys. I'm always reading the next move. I refuse to be outworked, and I consider myself to have the heart of a lion.
— Draymond Green

SPORTS

From the Bleachers



COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO

Maybe, just maybe, I was wrong.

After months of gnashing my teeth and cursing the Cubs owners and management for not spending any money and just sitting back and watching as the good teams got better, things improved greatly on Sunday.

When free agency began, Cody Bellinger's agent wanted a 200 million dollar, 10 year contract. Bellinger had a great year, but the previous two seasons were terrible. The Cubs, and all the other teams for that matter, thought the asking price was way too high, so Bellinger languished on the free agent market.

Sunday, a couple of weeks after teams reported for spring training, the team and agent got together and hammered out a deal. Bellinger signed a three year contract for 80 million dollars. If he has another great season or two, he can opt out of his contract after the first or second year, but if he has a bad season or two, he will still be compensated.

The contract seems fair for both sides and I'm both happy and in a strange way proud of Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer. He held his ground against the most powerful agent in sports and got a deal done without breaking the bank or shortchanging the player. Well played, sir.

So, what does this mean for the Cubs? Well, for this season the Las Vegas oddsmakers have installed the Cubs as division favorites. Also, it now makes more sense that they hired the man many think is the best manager in baseball, Craig Counsell to lead them.

The Cubs have quite a few highly rated youngsters that are on the verge of being ready for big league stardom. Bellinger is a gold glove center fielder and first baseman and before he signed, the Cubs had two highly touted rookies slated to play those positions and now, the Cubs outstanding manager can mix and match these guys to put them in the best position to succeed.

This bodes well for the future as the rookies of this year will be the veterans of tomorrow and they can show the new youngsters the ropes.

As almost anyone who reads this column probably knows, I'm a big Cub fan. While that makes me a biased observer, I truly believe that the Cubs are set up to win the division for the next four or five years. The kids will have to come through and a quality free agent might be needed to compete for the championship but the Cubs are definitely headed in the right direction.

I find it amazing how signing one player can make me change from a pessimist to an optimist. I love that I can stop worrying about the Cubs and focus my worries on what the Bears are going to do in the upcoming weeks. Meanwhile, about a month from now, the Major League Baseball season will begin when an umpire yells "play ball."

Walter Payton said, "When you're good at something, you'll tell everyone. When you're great at something, they'll tell you."

Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

Rookie weight lifter breaks school record

BY STAN MADDUX

He broke a New Buffalo High School record and qualified for the state finals in his first competitive match in weightlifting.

Senior Cameron Forker said he's always been naturally strong but was still surprised at how well he did in the regionals Feb. 24 near Muskegon.

"I'm pretty happy," he said.

Forker placed third in the super heavyweight division by lifting a combined 1,155 pounds in the dead lift, bench press and squat.

The total weight lifted qualified him for the state finals March 9 near Detroit.

His dead lift of 475 pounds set the new school record.

New Buffalo High School Athletic Director Matt Johnson said the previous high mark in the dead lift was 450 pounds by Josh Kaminski in 2017.

The 6'2", 310 pound Forker also lifted 275 pounds in the bench press and 405 pounds in the squat in the regionals.

Powerlifting at New Buffalo High School is a club sport.

Johnson said there were five matches the powerlifting team had a chance to get into this season but the door in what he described as sort of a lottery system opened for just two of the club competitions.

Forker said he missed the first match because of his responsibilities as Mr. New Buffalo to be at upcoming events associated with the Miss and Mr. Blossomtime pageant in the spring.

He started lifting weights for football in the eighth grade and kept doing so during every season of the sport he played in each of his four years of high school.

"Cam's always been a big guy. He's always had some good natural strength," said Johnson, who's also the head football coach.

It wasn't until Forker joined the club two months ago that lifting weights, working on his techniques and pushing himself to get better started to become part of his daily routine.

He called the results of his first match, "pretty crazy."

Forker said he engages in light lifting the day after heavy lifting to help his body recover before it's put to the test again.

"Sometimes you don't want to overdo it especially when you have a competition coming up to avoid being tired or fatigued," he said.

Forker said he's not sure where his future might be with weight lifting but doesn't expect to give it up after graduating in June.

"I'm going to continue lifting weights no matter what. I'll see if there's any local competitions I can go to just show them what I got," he said.

Bison stampede Mustangs in boys' basketball

BY STAN MADDUX

The New Buffalo High School boys' basketball team seemed like it had something to prove in defeating River Valley 81-27 at home Friday, Feb. 23.

On Feb. 3, the Bison struggled in the first half with the still winless Mustangs then came out strong in the second half for a 58-31 victory.

This time, the Bison appeared to be on a mission from the start and led 25-9 after the first quarter with help from buckets by M'Nason Smothers, James Shaw and Lucas Forker along with a smothering defense.

Among the most spectacular first quarter points came from a steal and pass from Andres Becera to a streaking Elliott Bourne for a lay-up.

There was no slowing down for the Bison in the second quarter.

The period began with a three point shot from Becera, Smothers and Forker grabbing offensive rebounds for lay-ups and Forker stealing the ball and delivering a nifty pass to Bourne for another lay-up.

Passes from Becera to Bourne and from Smothers to Becera for easy buckets gave the Bison a 35 point lead.

The score was 52-13 at halftime.

The 5'7" Smothers off a steal early in the third quarter tried a slam dunk but settled for laying the ball softly into the rim.

Forker led all scorers with 22 points followed by Shaw with 11.

Smothers and Bourne each had 10 points.

Jquan Pierce led the Mustangs with 16 points.

New Buffalo Head Coach Nate Tripp said it was possibly the best game his still improving team has played all season.

The Bison improved to 12-10 following a 1-6 start.

"They're just a different team now. They're focused and locked in. They've got purpose and they have vision and they understand what it's going to take to get to the next level," he said.

The Bison on February 21 defeated Bloomingdale on the road 71-55.

Sam Tripp led the Bison with 15 points followed by Smothers with 14 points.

Bison open post season with victory

BY STAN MADDUX

It took overtime but the New Buffalo High School boys' basketball team won their opening game in the District 4 post season tournament.

The Bison (13-10) defeated Countryside Academy at home Monday, Feb. 26, 71-63.

The players formed a circle at half court and celebrated what might have seemed impossible after winning just two games last year and losing six of their first seven games this year.

Senior Elliott Bourne credited the sudden turnaround to working extremely hard to improve during the off season and throughout the regular season.

Bourne said he and his teammates deciding to play as a team was also a factor in the rags to riches season.

"We put in so much work, it's unbelievable. The change in our team from last year to this year, I don't think any other team has been like this before. It's awesome. I never thought this would happen," he said.

"It feels like we're a brotherhood now," said senior Andres Becerra.

New Buffalo leading by seven points at the end of a fast paced and physical first quarter then seemed overwhelmed by the Cougars, who evened the score at halftime.

In the third quarter, the struggles continued for the Bison, who trailed by as many as seven points until 6'3" center Lucas Forker seemed to ignite a comeback.

He made two quick lay-ups and a third easy bucket after Becerra nailed a three point shot.

Nick Haskins later narrowed the gap to one point by stealing the ball at half court and racing in for a lay-up.

The Bison led by as many five points in the fourth quarter largely from a couple of spectacular buckets from 5'7" M'Nason Smothers.

The Cougars, though, came roaring back to force overtime with a hard fought lay-up at the buzzer.

New Buffalo went ahead for good when Becerra made both free throws from a technical foul called on the Cougars.

He then caught a long pass from Haskins and drove in for a lay-up.

The Cougars pulled to within three points with a minute to go but couldn't get any closer.

Forker led the team with 18 points.

Becerra had 13 points while Bourne contributed 11 points and Haskins scored 10 points.

Smothers finished with eight points.

Head Coach Nate Tripp said the victory felt good but he won't feel a sense of accomplishment unless the team wins the district title.

"I feel progress. Not accomplishment. We got a couple of more games to go before we feel that," he said.

Title hopes fizzle for Bison in Cinderella season

BY STAN MADDUX

Dreams of a District 4 championship for the surging New Buffalo High School boys' basketball team were laid to rest Wednesday, Feb. 28.

The Bison lost 63-42 to a much stronger Michigan Lutheran squad in the second round of the post season tournament at home.

New Buffalo, which won just two games with mostly freshman last season, began this year winning just one of their first seven games before going on a 12-4 tear.

Head Coach Nate Tripp said he felt the game would have been more competitive had it not been for key players like sophomore James Shaw playing with a freshly sprained ankle and Nick Haskins battling an illness on the court.

"Lutheran is a great team. I just think the timing was bad for our guys," he said.

He also felt more fouls should have called on the taller, physically stronger sharp shooting opponents.

In the second half, a double technical foul was called on Tripp for exploding from his frustration with the referees.

"The officiating was not on our side tonight. At some point, you got to protect your kids," he said.

New Buffalo pulled out to a one-point lead early in the game on free throws by sophomore Lucas Forker and Elliott Bourne slashing his way around defenders for a lay-up.

However, the Titans quickly went on a 10-point run with help from a slew of turnovers during a period when the Bison seemed overmatched.

The first quarter ended with New Buffalo trailing by seven points after Shaw nailed a short jump shot at the buzzer.

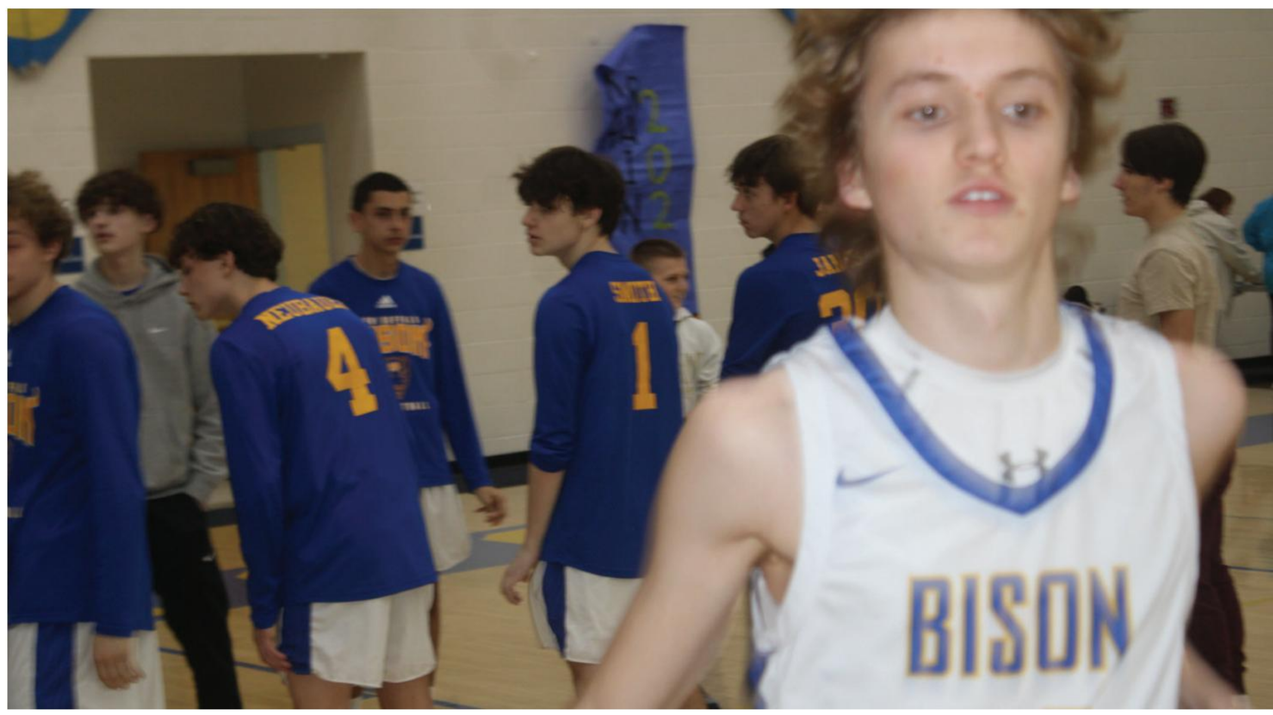
Michigan Lutheran continued to dominate and went into halftime with a 15-point lead.

In the third quarter, New Buffalo appeared to be on the verge of rallying but every time the Bison had a chance to cut the lead into single digits the Titans seemed to nail a three-point shot or go on a scoring spurt.

Forker led the team with 11 points followed by Shaw with nine points and Bourne with eight points.

Tripp said he's very proud of how the team with just two seniors vastly improved seemingly at the snap of the fingers but feels no real sense of accomplishment yet.

"I'm bursting with pride. We got great kids, but I can't accept second. I won't. I won't. That's just my mentality. We're going to win it all and we got a couple of years to do it," he said.



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New Buffalo bands give festival performance preview

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Family and friends were treated to a pre-festival band concert by the young musicians of the Blue and Gold Band and the HIgh School Band at the New Buffalo Performing Arts Center Wednesday, Feb. 21.

Members of the Blue and Gold Band played a variety of musical arrangements, such as "Gentle River," an lyrical ballad by Rob Grice that, according to the night's program, "depicts the simple beauty of a river as it flows peacefully through a green valley." Members of the High School Band played more arrangements, such as "Spania!", which was "written to capture the flair and fury of the Spanish tradition of bullfight."

The Blue and Gold Band's festival performance will take place Tuesday, March 5, at Paw Paw High School. Closer to home, the High School Band will perform Friday, March 1, at St. Joseph High School.

The Blue and Gold Band takes the stage

The High School Band takes the stage

The High School Band plays through a medley of arrangements

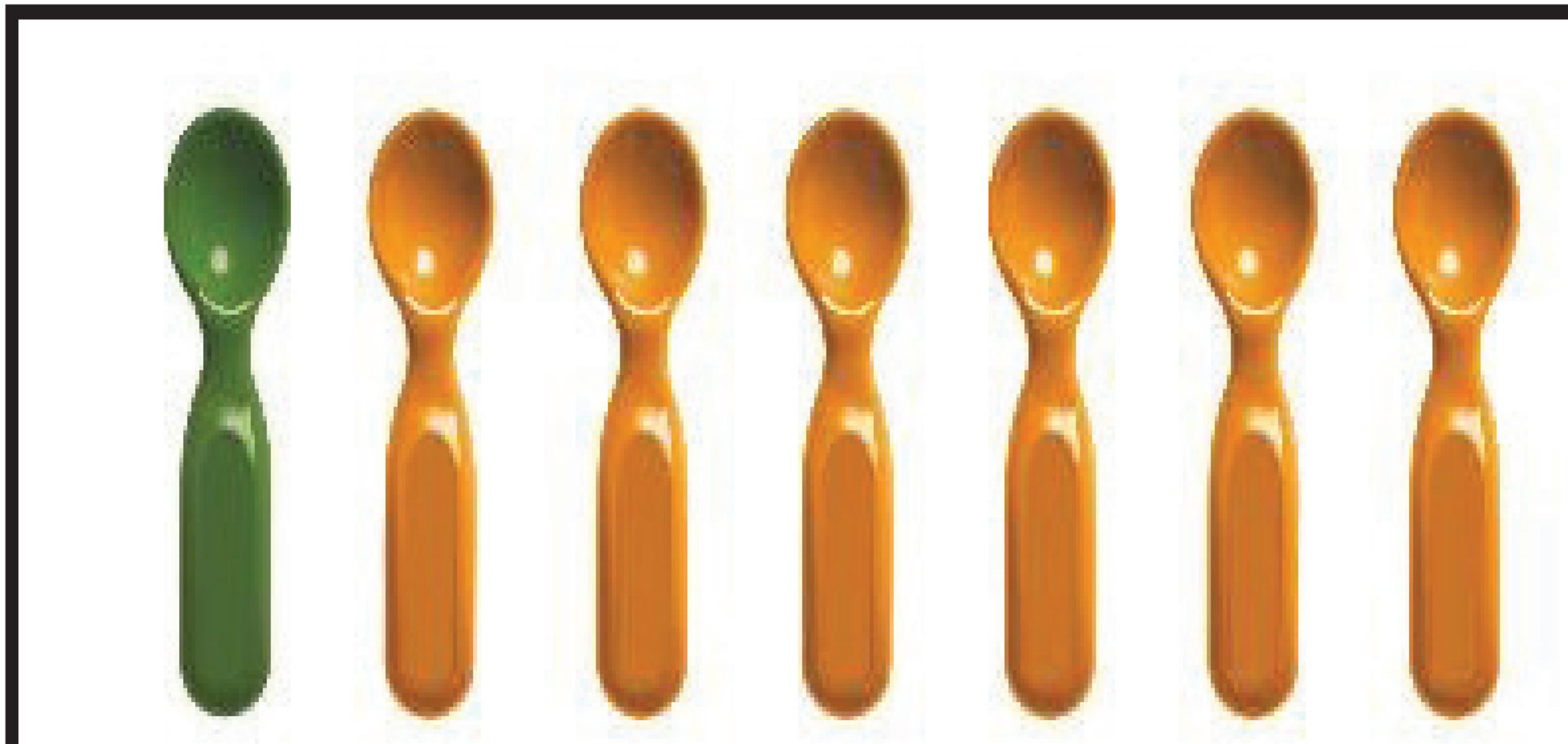
HIKERS TO EXPLORE LIFE OF SQUIRRELS

The Harbor Country Hikers will learn about the lives of some of the region's most visible year-round residents, squirrels, during a hike at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 9, at Sugarwood Forest Preserve in Three Oaks.

Hike leaders Jackie Jensen and Mark Forrest, Chikaming Open Lands stewards, will tell tales of these resilient rodents and how they survive Michigan winters while other animals move south or sleep through the cold weather. Sugarwood Forest Preserve is a plateau of uplands bisected by deep ravines into old-growth beech-maple forest and mesic mid-successional forests in various stages of regrowth after a history of grazing.

Though membership is preferred, this hike is open to all and there is no charge to attend. Those who attend are advised to dress for the weather and bring plenty of water.

For more information, including driving directions, visit www.harborcountryhikers.com or the Hikers' Facebook page. — STAFF REPORTS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Information session, 2024 construction update to be held at Chikaming Township Center

The Berrien County Road Department will be holding an informational session and construction schedule update for Lakeside Road, Pier Road, and W. East Road improvements in Chikaming Township from 5-7 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at Chikaming Township Center.

Representatives from the Berrien County Road Department will be present to provide an update of the project, which will be followed by a question and answer session on questions related to the project. Meeting topics included in the presentation will be project plans, streetscape elements, and more.

For those who are unable to attend in-person, there will be Zoom accommodations made available. A notice for Zoom details can be found at www.chikaming township.org.

Chikaming Township Hall is located at 13535 Red Arrow Highway in Harbert. — STAFF REPORTS

La Porte resident charged for beating, stabbing roommate

BY STAN MADDUX

A LaPorte County man told police he beat and stabbed his roommate because he could no longer tolerate living with him.

Matthew Castaneda, 35, is charged in LaPorte Circuit Court with aggravated battery.

Authorities said he and the victim, James Henoch, lived together at a mobile home park on U.S. 35 near Kingsford Heights.

Both men were home Sunday when the suspect allegedly pushed the victim to the floor, punched him twice in the face and stabbed him in the chest with a folding knife.

Castaneda then struck him with a baseball bat, according to court documents.

Henoch was taken to a Memorial Hospital in South Bend, where he was diagnosed with a punctured and collapsed lung as a result of the stabbing.

Authorities said the suspect told investigators he just snapped from many things not being fixed at the residence and attacked him while they were engaged in an argument.

Castaneda described the chains of events leading up to the attack as "an explosion of everything I have been going through living with him," according to court documents.

He could face anywhere from a three to 16 year sentence on the Level 3 felony charge.

Randy Houser to join grandstand entertainment line-up at youth fair

Berrien County Youth Fair officials have announced that the BC entertainment committee, along with presenting sponsor United Federal Credit Union, will be welcoming country star Randy Houser as one of the youth fair's grandstand entertainment acts for Berrien County's premier youth showcase at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 14.

With an inimitable voice The New York Times describes as "wholly different, thicker and more throbbing, a cauldron bubbling over," Houser racked up over half a dozen hits and 1 billion streams. With his "How Country Feels" album, he topped the charts with the title track, "Runnin' Outta Moonlight" and "Goodnight Kiss" (also his first number one hit as a songwriter) and earned critical acclaim for his powerful delivery of the Top 5 smash and CMA Song of the Year-nominated "Like A Cowboy."

Houser added a fourth number one hit to his catalog with "We Went" from his 2016 album, "Fired Up." Houser's sixth studio album, "Note To Self," is available now via Magnolia Music Group and features 10 tracks all co-written by the Mississippi native. His lead single and title track, "Note To Self," marked his "powerful return" following 2019's critically-acclaimed album, "Magnolia," with MusicRow boasting the Mississippi-native "remains one of country music's very finest vocalists."

With multiple sold-out shows in 2023, including an at-capacity stop at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, Houser wrapped 12 months of touring with Cody Johnson. Along with putting out his latest song "Cancel" and a relentless touring schedule, Houser landed on-screen roles in Martin Scorsese's acclaimed film "Killers of the Flower Moon" starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro in late 2023 as well as the inspiring "The Hill" starring Dennis Quaid, which was the number one most streamed movie on Netflix in February 2024.

Tickets for this concert go on sale at 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 5, at the

Fair office, online at www.bcyf.org or by phone at 269-473-1500 (ticket fees do not include gate admission).

The Berrien County Youth Fair, which will run Aug. 12-17, is celebrating 78 years with the theme "Explore Planet Fair." — STAFF REPORTS

HOROSCOPE

FEBRUARY 29-MARCH 6, 2024

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

Even if things get hectic on the social scene, press forward with getting ideas formalized into concrete plans. Maintain a peaceful disposition and avoid reacting to social media. There is value in working with a larger team but you may have to deal with a lot of different personalities along the way.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

Take time to reflect on your social scene this week. It's important to be more selective with who you let into your inner circle. Create boundaries but leave room for change, as new information will be coming in that could create some interesting plot twists and unmask the true champions of your story.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

Stay true to your inner voice and honor your gut feelings. Even if it is of no consequence to others, staying true to your hidden or personal feelings will make being with others easier and less contentious. Before you make any big changes listen to your inner voice first, then ask others.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

Social issues or anxieties are ephemeral. Let them dissipate on their own and don't react to vague insinuations or innuendos. People tend to be ambiguous when they want to manipulate. Let people have their illusions while you see the facts. Wait things out as true intentions will be revealed.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

It's time to gather your family and close associates to clear the air and reconnect. Show people you are committed to working together and staying the course by offering the olive branch first. Let the leaders emerge naturally and if social divisions happen, it will be done peacefully, now.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

This is the time to show how good you are at collaborating and working as part of a team by communicating in a timely manner and organizing the groups thoughts. Also, your investigative and people reading skills with greatly increase the number of ideas brainstorming sessions bring about.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

There may be small sacrifices required before you can really get connected with people this week. But it will be worth it as you help others get clarity and peace of mind from serious heartbreak or disappointment. Opportunities for connecting are fleeting, but their effect is long lasting

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

Be clear with partners and family about where your heart is. Be authentic even, if you think it may not be what they want to hear. People can respect honesty but will not tolerate being deceived. By being honest, it opens the space for others to be genuine too.

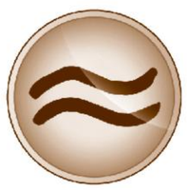
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

Let the love in this week. Open your home and heart to others. This is the time to bury the hatchet and resolve past issues. Reset relationships with honest discussions. This is when the hard to hear truths will land a little softer. Share your feelings but be sure to listen with an open heart more.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

Your heart and emotions will be somewhat changeable and unpredictable this week. Before you give up or move on, try to see the real value or specialness of the relationship first. Look for the signs and trust that there is a higher force showing you the way. Have faith.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



Once you can be at peace with yourself you will be able to bring peace to your relationships. Let go of grudges by realizing household set ups are transient and change over time. Nothing is constant but change. Avoid getting overly involved by letting this situation run its course naturally.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

There is a sense of being tested or evaluated this week and rather than feeling pressured to perform, think of it only as the dress rehearsal. Go forward with your lines but take direction from the nonverbal cues. Make changes only if they stay true to your original script or idea.

A check or credit card, a Gucci bag strap, anything of value will do. Give as you live. *— Jesse Jackson*

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Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

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	5			6	2		3	
8	1		4					6
	2	3						
		5					7	
7				5			6	3
3			1					5

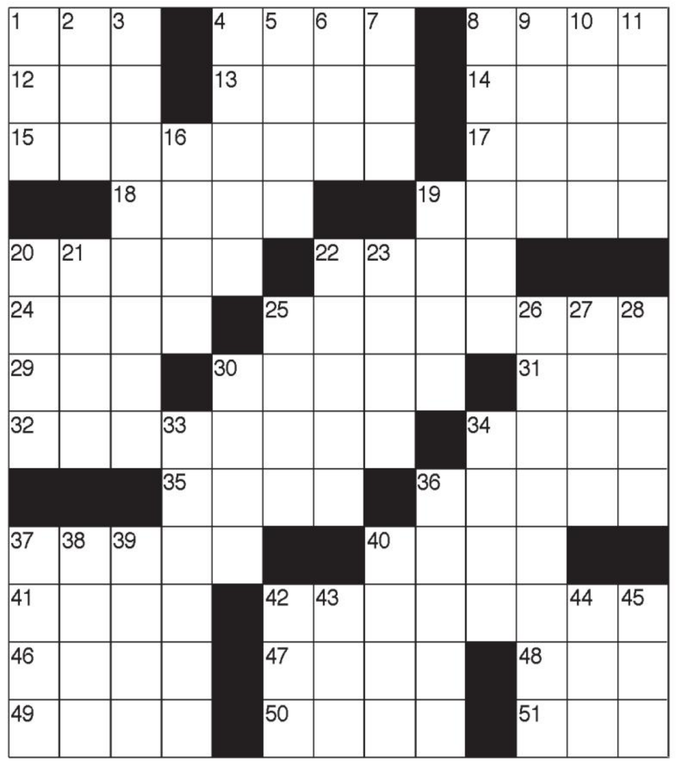
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Drunk driving (abbr.)
4 Gooseberry
8 Eastern bishop's title
12 Belonging to (suf.)
13 King Atahualpa
14 Wife of Jacob
15 Jeopardize
17 Compel
18 Adjective-forming (suf.)
19 Indian memorial post
20 Stopping train
22 Leglike part
24 Irish exclamation
25 Eidola
29 Ran into
30 Sputnik dog
31 7 (Rom. numeral)
32 Can
34 Euphemistic oath
35 Before (Lat.)
36 Father of Abraham
37 Rust
40 Freedman in Kentish law
41 Study
42 Par
46 Deep cut
47 River through Florence and Pisa
48 Scot. jackdaw
49 Flightless bird
50 Wild mango fruit
51 Last Queen of Spain

DOWN

1 River into the North Sea
2 Haggard
3 Denote
4 Last
5 Anglican (abbr.)
6 Before common era (abbr.)
7 Lug
8 About
9 Rhythmical accent
10 Roast
11 Attention-getting sound
16 Academy (abbr.)
19 Tunny
20 Light
21 Polish border river
22 Onionlike plant
23 Gardening tool
25 Allowance
26 Pass
27 Transparent mineral
28 Hindu sect
30 Marquisette
33 Hindu holy man
34 Obey
36 Kava bowl
37 Insist
38 Countersink
39 Expedite
40 Thin
42 Blue
43 Three (pref.)
44 Bled
45 Drug Enforcement Admin. (abbr.)



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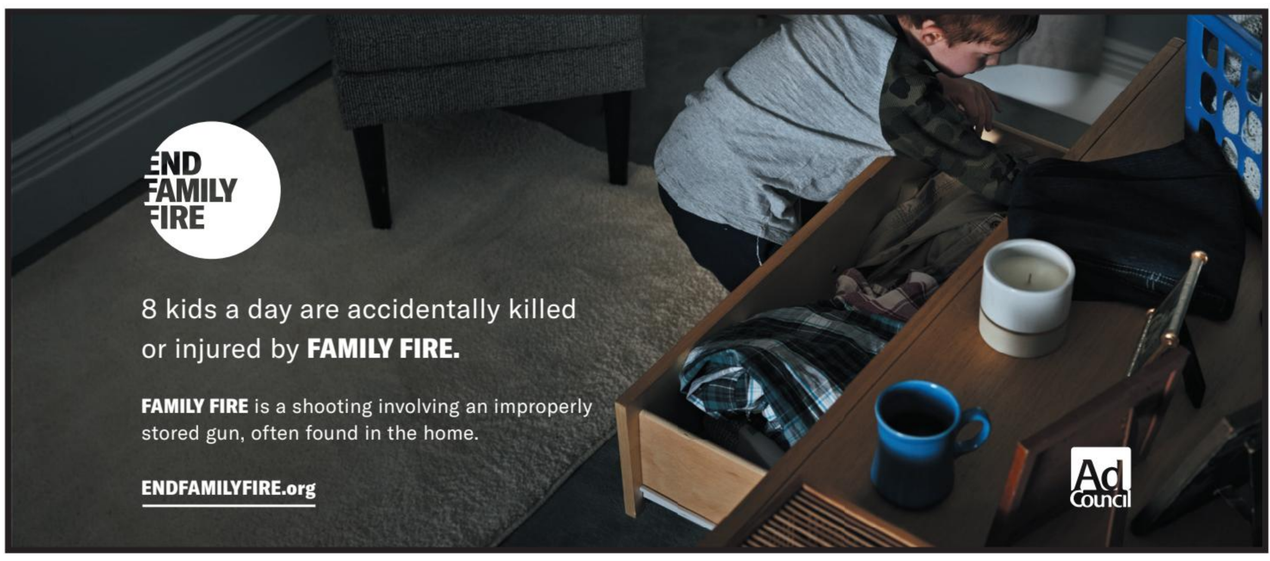
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Incumbent removed from La Porte Primary ballot

BY STAN MADDUX

A LaPorte County official will not be able to seek a third term as a Republican unless the removal of his name from the ballot is overturned on appeal.

The LaPorte County Election Board voted to remove the name of Commissioner Rich Mrozinski from the May 7 Republican primary ballot Friday, Feb. 23.

The request was made by LaPorte County Republican Party Chairman Allen Stevens.

One of the violations cited by Stevens and upheld by the election board was Mrozinski failed to place his initials, as required by state law, on three separate places on paperwork candidates must file to run for office.

The Election Board also agreed with Stevens that Mrozinski should be taken off the ballot from being a republican not in good standing with the LaPorte County Republican central committee.

The committee made up of republican precinct committeepersons throughout the county voted unanimously in September of 2022 to remove Mrozinski as an official member of the party.

Stevens said among the acts of defiance against the party by Mrozinski was making a $100 contribution to the campaign of democrat Sheila Matias in her bid for a second term as a county commissioner in 2022.

Matias was soundly defeated by republican Connie Gramarossa, who's now president of the three member executive branch of county government.

He brought up other issues such as Mrozinski placing a rubber snake inside a paper bag that he left outside the office door of republican LaPorte County Auditor Tim Stabosz late at night following a political feud.

Stevens cited a law upheld in federal courts that guarantees political parties freedom from associating with candidates not in good standing with their parties and ability to protect themselves "from intrusion by those with "adverse political principles."

Representing Mrozinski was attorney Alan Sirinek, who argued the lack of initials on his candidacy filing documents is not strong enough grounds for removal from the ballot.

Sirinek said election laws under state statute are meant to be viewed with flexibility to prevent voters from being disenfranchised too easily.

"I think it falls under the category of a mere technicality," he said.

Sirinek also said Mrozinski was not notified in advance about the meeting where the vote was taken to oust him from the party.

He said that was a violation of due process where people have a right to defend themselves prior to a decision on a proposed act of discipline.

"Mr. Mrozinski was not advised in any shape or form this action was being contemplated. He learned after the fact in a newspaper article on it," he said.

Sirinek said no decision has been made yet on whether to appeal to the decision.

Mrozinski has until Thursday to file an appeal with one of the LaPorte County courts.

Stevens said he was delighted with the decision, alleging Mrozinski has publicly slammed local Republicans.

He also claimed Mrozinski lied about placing the snake until learning he was captured on video walking out of the building several hours before Stabosz found it outside his door the next morning.

"It's been a long time coming," he said.

Sirinek said Republicans at the national level are angry about efforts to keep former president Donald Trump off the ballot this year in some states yet "the local Republican Party has no problem with disenfranchising LaPorte County citizens."

"I certainly felt the deck was stacked against us," he said.

If he loses on appeal, Mrozinski can still run for reelection.

That would have to be in the November general election as a Libertarian, Independent or write-in candidate, said LaPorte County Clerk Heather Stevens.

Stevens said the Democratic Party has Mike Kellems as its only candidate in the primary and the filing deadline for the primary has expired.

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Dan Hollister talks with audience members in the Meeting Room

Audience members await the documentary's debut in the Meeting Room

Terry and Lorraine Hanover with Dan Hollister, and Elizabeth Meister (bottom) in the Activities Room

Documentary spotlights the story of New Troy

"NEW TROY: A LITTLE COMMUNITY THAT COULD"

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Six generations of Terry Hanover's family have planted roots in New Troy.

"When your family has been here for a few generations, you feel a little bit special about the soil that you're brought up on," he said.

Terry felt so special about New Troy, he, along with numerous other volunteers, was willing to endure years of fundraising, money issues and determination to save what is now a thriving community gathering space: the Friends of New Troy Community Center.

Their journey is traced throughout an audio documentary, "New Troy: A Little Community That Could," produced by Dan Collison and Elizabeth Meister of the not-for-profit, Three Oaks-based Long Haul Productions, which debuted in the meeting room at the community center Thursday, Feb. 22.

"It's not only for posterity's sake to tell the story of Friends of New Troy but to kind of highlight that we're kind of an unorthodox place - we don't really do things conventionally but we work together and we do our best to develop a healthy community and make it work," Victoria Petroff, president of the Friends of New Troy Board of Directors, said.

Once upon a time, New Troy was a town that boasted two grocery stores and two gas stations, the Trojan Grill and the high school - one of the "finest schools in Berrien County at one time," Terry said.

On Sept. 30, 1965, New Troy High School held its final Homecoming celebration before closing its doors due to the opening of the new River Valley High School.

By the time Lorraine, Terry's wife, came to town in the 1970s, New Troy had become a shell of its former, bustling self: Everything became "run down" and "trashy," Lorraine said, with drugs moving in by 1980.

"One descriptive phrase of New Troy was the armpit of society - a lot of the yards were neglected, there wasn't a lot of money," Lorraince said.

The grade school's closure in 2005 seemed to be the death knell for New Troy.

Things took a swift turn, though, when the River Valley Board of Education wanted to sell the 12-acre campus.

FONT, which was formed in October 2005, informed the school board that they desired to turn the campus into a park and community center, with Terry telling the Herald Palladium that he envisioned the six-acre site being the "centerpiece of a recreation plan" and that the building would make a good community center and the grounds a nice park that would "restore New Troy's identity."

The Friends of New Troy convinced the school board to sell the campus for $240,000 - money that they lacked. Fortunately, four married couples signed the mortgage and became responsible for paying off that loan.

FONT, with the help of volunteers, worked on fixing up the 1,250 square feet building. Soon, Terry proposed that a Friends of New Troy nonprofit be formed to raise money for repairs, the heat and the mortgage.

In Jan 2010, the Weesaw Park became a reality when FONT sold eight and a half acres to the township for $75,000 - which came right off the loan and got them down to "just over $100,000," Terry said.

"That's the point where we were able, as the Friends of New Troy, to take on the loan ourselves," he said.

More fundraisers, such as a popular flea market, followed. In October 2020, FONT was able to pay off the mortgage and became the sole owner of the community center thanks to the generous donation of $35,000 from an anonymous couple.

These days, the community center serves as the community's hub of activity: a game of pickleball going on in the gym, a story on the past being uncovered in the History Room and children's laughter from the Activities Room reverberating around the building.

"We're asking for a culture to be created here - of kindness and of gratitude and for it to be a safe space where people feel as though they are welcomed, where people come in and know they're supported," Petrorff said.

Collison and Meister, who started Long Haul Productions around 30 years ago when they were still living in Chicago, said that they were taking yoga classes from Elizabeth Nuti of Skybird Yoga at the center.

"We kind of got to know people - we saw Miss Ollie and 'Wiggles and Giggles' and we brought our dogs in - it just seemed like there's a great spirit," Collison said.

"It (the center) was created entirely from labor and love and donation... When you see this place and it's in such beautiful condition now, they've worked so hard it's really inspirational," Meister said.

The Michigan Council on Arts and Humanities helped fund the documentary.

Upcoming activities and updates on Friends of New Troy can be found at www.friendsofnewtory.org.

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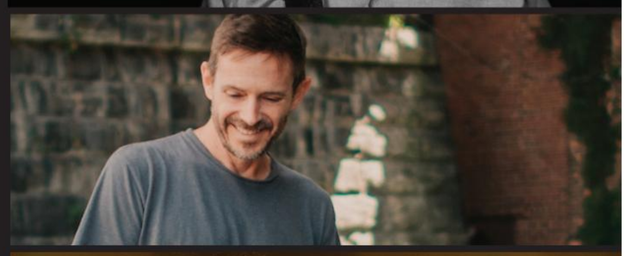

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